DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 086 434 RC 007 606

AUTHOR Steele, Dorrance D.
TITLE Educating Native American (Indians): Better Programs Needed.
PUB DATE 26 Feb 74
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the American Association of School Administrators 106th Annual Convention, Atlantic City, N.J., February 22-26, 1974

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *American Indians; *Cultural Awareness; *Educational History; *Educational Responsibility; Federal Programs; *Parent School Relationship; Reservations (Indian); Treaties; Tribes

ABSTRACT

The intention of this paper was to inform readers about educating Native Americans and what could be done to better meet the Indians' needs. To present this, the paper covered the history of Indian education, the present, and the future. Indians were initially educated to force them to change, assimilate, and become acculturized, rather than to learn. For example, the Indian has been told by non-Indians what to do, when to do it, how to do it, and where to go. In the year of 1568, Louis XIV stipulated that the Jesuits educate Indian children in the French manner. The Franciscans assembled the Indians around their missions and taught practical, life-sustaining skills such as farming. At the end of the 19th century, the Federal boarding school system was inagurated. This policy separated the child from his family and tribe. State involvement in Indian education began with the passage of the 1934 Johnson O'Malley Act and was later followed by other Federal programs--e.g., Public Law 874. All 3 philosophies directed themselves towards anglicizing the Indian, gearing the curriculum to middle class American society. For the future, Indian parents, as a screening committee, must look critically at the textbooks used in the school. The materials and textbooks used must reflect cultural diversity, and must emphasize the positiveness of Indian contributions to this country. Indian cultural integrity must be preserved. The tragedy that the Indian student has experienced educationally must be discontinued. (FF)

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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
106th ANNUAL CONVENTION
FEBRUARY 22-26, 1974 ATLANTIC CITY, N.J.

SPEAKER: Dorrance D. Steele, Assistant Executive Director the National Advisory Council on Indian Education. Washington, D.C.

TOPIC: EDUCATING NATIVE AMERICAN (INDIANS): BETTER PROGRAMS NEEDED

TIME: 2:30PM: Sunday, February 24, 1974

PLACE: Dennis Hotel, Borton Hall

PROGRAM: Page #56 FOR RELEASE UPON DELIVERY

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I wish to thank this association and the individuals responsible for inviting me to speak to you today.

My intent is to inform you on educating native americans and what could be done to better meet their needs. My intention is not to offend anyone, if I do, I apologize.

I would like to set the stage for my presentation. For those of you who do not understand the American Indian, my presentation would be meaningless. To get my point across, I must go back into history, come up to the present, and go into the future. In other words, what was, what is and what ought-to-be.

The education of the American Indian in the beginning was to change, assimilate, and acculturize us, not to educate us. For example, the American Indian has been told by the non-indian what to do, when to do it, how to do it, and where to go, ever since the non-indian came to America. He has been told, "You are not to do that, you are to do this:" To be a good citizen, you obey these laws, you are to dress this way, to be healthy you eat these things, you use a fork, to be religious you go to church on a certain day, to be polite you say, "Yes Sir" or "No Sir" and you open doors for ladies.

John Wooden Legs, A northern Cheyenne, says, that is one rule of the whiteman that the Indian should adopt, "The whitenan opens the door for a lady, pushes her in and if nothing happens to her then he goes in."

American Indians have been ruthlessly discriminated against in education. Not only are IQ tests devised to measure the qualities valued by white-middle-class americans but the school texts show people of other ethnic origins as being stupid, brutal, savages, crude, and lazy. Some text books refer to the American Indians as savages, or if he's a good Indian, he's referred to as a noble savage.

Contrary to popular belief, education did not come to the North American Continent on the Nona, The Pinta, and The Santa Maria; and neither did it come on the Mayflower. Education is as native to this continent as the native peoples themselves. We, as the native peoples of this continent, had our own means of educating our youth. We had the rich oral tradition which was, and is yet today, a means of education for the native pre-american transmitted to us by the elders of the tribe, via the oral tradition. I, as a Sioux Indian, know that our world was created by Wakan Tanka, in Sioux means, "Great or big-Holy or Spirit." I know that he made the water, the light, the sky air and the water peoples. I know that he made mother earth, I know Wakan Tanka put man on mother earth. We have our Genesis: the non-indian too, has his Genesis. The only difference, however is that ours is not recorded in the Bible, and consequently is referred to as a myth. We have our unique religious beliefs, we have our unique philosophical concepts, we account for the constellations in the universe, we have our accounts of history. We have an entire way of life. We, as the native peoples of this continent have a culture—(We possess the 5 components of culture).

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1- Language or communication
2- Diet or foods
3- Dress or costuming
4- Values and beliefs
5- Social patterns or ethics

Furthermore, we have a means of transmitting that culture from one generation to the next. We did not attain adulthood ignorant of the ways of life.

Then came 1492....As Columbus stepped ashore he bent down and kissed the ground. He was trying to tell the natives something, "From this day on, you can kiss your land good-bye."

Historically, formal education began with the arrival of the non-indian to this country approximately four centuries ago. The pattern of educating the American Indian (a permanent misnomer) to non-indian ways was set, and it continues through today. The strategy taken is one of coercive assimilation.

The year of 1568 is the year in which the native american became heir to the non-indians' formal education system. In that year some Florida Indians were enrolled in a school established for them in Havana, Cuba, by a group of Jesuits. It was the goal of the Jesuits not only to christianize these indians, but also to make them into the image of Frenchmen. Louis XIV, as a condition to providing financial support stipulated that the Jesuits "Educate the children of the Indians in the french manner." Much like the contemporary Bureau of Indian Affairs Educational Policy, they separate the child from his family and tribe; emphasis was, of course, placed on the French language and customs. In addition, they emphasized the study of traditional academic subjects. Assimilation tactics.

The Franciscans, also assumed the responsibility for the education of the native peoples. Their policy was different, instead of separating the child from his family and tribe they assembled the indians around their missions in villages; their curriculum did not consist soley of study of traditional academic subjects, but emphasis was instead placed upon instruction in practical life sustaining skills, such as:
1. Clearing land
2. Building irrigation ditches
3. Plowing, planting, and harvesting crops
4. Threshing wheat and barley

The indians were taught the arts of "Carpentry, Blacksmithing, Masonry, Spinning and Weaving and the Making of Clothing, Soap and Candles." (Just to speculate a little, maybe this is where the theory that, "Indians are only good with their hands" originated. The inference of this stereotype is that, "Indians are not good with their minds.") In addition to the Jesuits and Franciscans, the Protestants, who, also, saw it as their divine right to "Christianize and civilize" the native american. On March 24, 1617, King James I directed the Anglican Clergy to collect funds—

"For the erecting of some churches and school for ye education of ye children of these barbarian in Virginia."

As a direct result of king James' concern, the establishment of the College of William and Mary was chartered in 1691.

For approximately the first three centuries of Anglo-European contact, the education of the "Heathen, Un-Christianized" peoples of this continent fell upon the churches. Thus, religion became one of the three R's of the early basic Indian Education Curriculum.

Dartmouth College evolved from a training school for indians in the home of the Reverend E. Wheelock in Lebanon, Connecticut.

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Reverend Wheelock's educational philosophy required the substitution of the influences of a puritan home for the student's natural environment and saturating him with secular and religious knowledge as well as "husbandry." He later relocated his home to Hanover, New Hampshire, named it Moor's Charity School, and it eventually became Dartmouth College. Again a policy of assimilation. Dartmouth's avowed purpose in it's charter is for—

" the education and instruction of youth of Indian Tribes of this land in reading, writing, and all parts of learning which shall appear necessary and expedient for civilizing and christianinizing children of pagans, as in all liberal arts and sciences, and also of English Youths and any others."

Judging from the remarks of William Byrd, efforts at educating the Indian must have been disheartening to the non-indian. He writes—

"Many of the children of our neighboring indians have been brought up in the College of William and Mary. They have been taught to read and write, and have been carefully instructed in the principles of the christian religion until they came to man. Yet after they returned home, instead of civilizing and converting the rest, they have immediately relapsed into infidelity and barbarism themselves."

Disappointed because some efforts at assimilation had failed, not only were the non-indians disheartened by their seeming lack of success at educating us, we were the indians, but for different reasons. In 1744, one Indian Chief made the following observation, to the Virginia Commissioners:

"Several of our young people were formerly brought up in the colleges. They were instructed, but when they came to us, they were bad runners; ignorant of every means of living in the woods; unable to bear either cold or hunger; knew neither how to build a cabin, take a deer, or kill an enemy; spoke our language imperfectly; were therefore neither fit for hunters, warriors, or counselors; they were totally good for nothing."

Up to 1775, the responsibility for educating the American Indian was primarily that of the church. At this time the Continental Congress appropriated $500.00 to Dartmouth College for the education of indian students. Five years later this figure was increased to $5,000. The first treaty including an educational provision was the 1794 Oneida, Tuscaron and Stockbridge Treaty. (400 treaties were negotiated, 370 were ratified by U.S.Congress)

In 1819, federal invlvement increased, with the appropriation of $10,000 distributed to religious groups for the education of the indian.

In 1868, a Congressional Committee Report, prompted a greater involvement in Indian Education by the government. Because of the findings of this committee, a three-point plan of reform was called for, which consisted of educating , christianizing, and civilizing the American Indian. The assimilative process again.

At the end of the 19th century, the Federal Boarding School System was inagurated. In 1879, the first Non-Reservation Boarding School was opened in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The policy of Off-Reservation Boarding Schools continued until 1929. This policy separated the child from his family and tribe. The governmental approach to indian education, was still to transform the indian into a "Rural White American Farmer."

In 1928, The Meriam Survey Report compiled by the Institute for Government Research, disclosed the same deplorable state of the american indian, as did the 1868 congressional report.

In a capsule, I have reviewed the involvement of the church and the federal government in their effort to educationally assimilate the American Indian. Let us look briefly at state involvement. This was initiated with the passage of the 1934 Johnson-O'Malley Act. In this

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legislation, the Secretary of the Interior is authorized to contract with State Agencies to provide an effective education for the Native American. By calling for an effective education, the government did not mean to continue the assimilation policy. However, the Johnson-O'Malley Act has never been funded in a manner that would fully meet the needs of the Indian Student. There are other pieces of legislation that affect Indian Education; however, up until June 26, 1972, the Johnson-O'Malley Act was the only federal education program which uniquely benefits the Indian Student. Legislation that may affect the education of Indian children:

1. P-L 81-874 in lieu of taxes of operation and maintenance
2. P-L 81-815 for construction
3. ESEA TITLE I educationally disadvantaged
4. ESEA TITLE III innovative programs
5. TITLE VII bilingual education

There are others that I will not mention at this time. One important bill that affected Indian education was, Senate Resolution 80, which authorized "An investigation into the problems of education for American Indians". The finding of the special sub-committee on Indian education disclosed the same deplorable conditions of the 1928 Congressional Committee Report and the Meriam Survey Report. The 1969 report was aptly titled, "Indian Education: A National tragedy--a National challenge." Other surveys (1972-"Between two milestones") report the same findings. Failure of the three types of schools in meeting the educational needs of the American Indians are evidenced by the following statistics:

1. Drop-out rates are twice the national average. Some school districts have drop-out rates approaching 100 percent.
2. Achievement levels of Indian children are 2 to 3 years below those of white students; and the Indian child falls progressively further behind the longer he stays in school.
3. Only 1 percent of Indian children in elementary school have Indian teachers or principals.
4. One-fourth of elementary and secondary school teachers -- by their own admission -- would prefer not to teach Indian children.
5. Indian children, more than any other minority group, believe themselves to be "below average" in intelligence.
6. Only 3 percent of Indian students who enroll in college, graduate; the national average is 32 percent.
7. Only one of every 100 Indian college graduates will receive a master's degree.
8. More than one out of every five Indian men have less than five years of schooling.
9. Only 18 percent of the indian population is ever enrolled in college, compared to 50 percent of the non-indian. (Senator Montoya, N. Mex.)

This is a tragedy--it is a national tragedy. Obviously identifying the problems is one matter; however, there must be contributory factors for this educational failure. As one takes a look at the three schools, there are a number of commonalities which surface. These commonalities have had varying and differing effects upon the Indian child. Some of the more crucial commonalities are:

1. All three schools direct themselves to "anglicizing" the Indian. They want to make the Indian that which he isn't. They want to change the Indian from being a proud being to a confused individual.
2. Irrelevant curriculum: in all three systems, the curriculum is geared to middle-class american society. The course offerings reflect only the "Anglo" role or position or even less. By far the largest criticism of schools is the apparent irrelevancy of the curriculum and some of the text books used.
   a. there has been too much emphasis upon conformity
   b. the curriculum fails to develop the concept of cultural pluralism, the idea that several different cultures can co-exist without the assimilative process. There has been a deliberate attempt to keep the beauty and truth of Indian culture, history, and heritage out of the curriculum.
   c. text books used in this curriculum which foster negative self-concept of the Indian child. There has been omission of the American Indians contribution to this country.

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The many inaccuracies that have been allowed to go to print reflected in the historical facts is a shame. The tone in which text books treat the American Indian is not good. Text books you will probably agree are "one of the most powerful means through which society transmits ideas from generation to generation."

3. The teachers have been predominantly white or non-indian. White teachers who have had little, if any, understanding of cross-cultural education. There is also prejudice. No one wants to admit to prejudice, but it is present ranging from outright hostility to condescension. True, there are some interested teachers in some schools. Some teachers believe we have no culture, some consider it un-american to introduce cultural studies into the classroom. Insensitivity of some teachers to subtle and many times intangible differences of the indian child's values, attitudes and feelings.
4. Lack of education preparation for prospective teachers of indian students. Some universities are attempting to do something about this, many are not.
5. Too much emphasis on the validity of intelligence tests. In 1914, after administering the Binet-Simon Test to indian and non-indian children (Mount Pleasant, Michigan) E. C. Rowe made the following observation:
   "The striking difference cannot be explained by hygienic, social and educational differences...it seems therefore that the only satisfactory explanation of their inferiority in terms of the test is to be found in the inferiority of native ability." Which of course, is sheer nonsense.
6. The indian parents are not involved in school organizations. In fact, parents were deliberately left out and excluded. In 1928 the Meriam Report stated:
   "No matter how much may be done in the schools, or how much the educational program may center around the school, a genuine educational program will have to comprise the adults of the community as well as the children." Too often the indian parent has been branded apathetic. Doctors Roselie and Murray Wax say--
   "Apathy is a convenient label to apply to people who don't happen to agree with the program that a government official or other reformer happens to be pushing..."

We also have ambiguous attitudes of indian parents to education. On the one hand, the American Indians place a high value on education, but on the other hand they are suspicious that school is making their children into the image of whitemen, with little or no empnasis on their origins as native pre-americans.

7. The cultural barrier, the options apparently open to the indian child range from assimilation to resistance of the assimilative process. This resistance often times has manifested itself in withdrawal, indifference, and non-cooperation. But sometime it has resulted in assimilation. Sometime the individual is pressured into being ashamed of being indian.
8. Lastly, I want to discuss the stereotyping of the indian child as being dumb or subject to failure. These commonalities found in the three school systems reflect the type of environment under which a youngster is forced to learn or gain knowledge. With so many negative factors, it is no wonder that the indian child finds it difficult, if not impossible, to learn. It is no wonder that parents are confused and unsupportive of education.

Upon having identified the areas of concern in Indian education and looked at the causes behind the concerns, we must bear in mind that these are just words, just talk, in many cases no positive action. What is being done and what can be done to correct this national tragedy? It is indeed sad that the educational system has failed its first american. Let us look at the challenges it presents to us as educators. We can certainly profit by the mistakes of the past.

1. Today, state and federal laws are being passed in favor of Indian education. Some states are passing laws that affect teachers of Indian students. Montana recently rewrote the State Constitution and incorporated two goals under Article X of Education and Public lands which state:
   1. It is the goals of the people to establish a system of education which will develop the full potential of each person. Equality of educational opportunity is guaranteed to each person of the State.

2. The State recognized the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity.

As a result of the revision of their new State Constitution, the recent 43rd Legislative Assembly passed two bills that require:

1. American Indian studies to be part of the educational background of teachers and administrators that are employed on or near an Indian Reservation.
2. The State encourages the public schools to include in their curricula courses in American Indian Studies and teacher-training institutions to provide programs specifically designed to prepare teachers to teach Indian children. Teachers are required to take courses that sensitize them to the special needs of Indian students. Because of these laws some colleges and universities are offering courses in American Indian Studies pertaining to history, traditions, customs, values, beliefs, ethics, and contemporary affairs of American Indians.

2. Indian parents should be allowed to interview and ask questions of teachers before they are hired. My opinion is that we have four identificable groups of teachers that teach Indian children on reservations.

GROUP I - These are those people who are genuinely interested in Indian education, who really see a critical and urgent need to improve and develop this field. These are people who genuinely see it as a viable, dynamic reality. They are people who accept the fact that Indian education must be developed and the unique needs of Indian children be met.

GROUP II - A possible second category would be those individuals who are "Adventure Seekers." These are individuals who make it their life's goal to add as many different and unique chapters as possible to their life's history. These are people who one day will sit back in their easy chairs and reminisce; and as the many chapters of their lives fly by, they will come upon that chapter that says "Indian Education". They will recall that it was truly a unique adventure but yet a hollow venture because they contributed nothing to the growth and development of Indian education.

GROUP III - The third group could be classified as the "Do Goodera". These people are motivated to do everything for the Indian. They know what is best and they know how it is to be done. The "Do Goodera" too often contribute to creating alienation and bringing about a separation of ways.

GROUP IV - The fourth category could be those people who are "Escapists". They are people who cannot compete or face the many realities in their own society. They can find the needed reinforcement in working with people of a different culture who are struggling to adjust to an alien one.

I am sure there are other categories or groups which could be added. Teachers who teach Indian students should become more sensitive to Indian concerns and more conscious of Indian student needs. The instruction should help bring about positive changes in the attitudes of students and teachers, develop rapport between teachers and students, and provide more relevant curriculum We are asking teachers to teach in addition to and not instead of, thus enriching the educational experience for all students and halting the emotional crippling that is occurring.

3. Indian parents need to become actively involved in the educational programs that effect the education of their children. They have served as teacher aides, chaperones, helped with school parties, field trips, and athletic events. However, this is not enough. Indian parents simply must know more about the school, its total program and how their children fare at each step of the process. They must become involved in program development, policy making, and the day to day operational levels of the schools. When developing an Indian Studies program, we must seek the advice of the local indian community. There is a wealth of knowledge out there that can be used in the classroom. Local Indians can be used as resource people or consultants.

Indian communities have complained about the type and quality of education their children receive. They have expressed a desire to control their own schools, but because of their lack of political power of influence this has been almost impossible.
4. Too often, there are programs and funds available at these agencies but the word does not get out as to who to contact or where to apply. We must attempt to fill the communication gap that exists between federal, state, and local educational agencies. We need concerned liaison or resource people among these agencies to communicate with Indian tribes, Indian organizations, Indian groups, and Indian parents out in the field to make them constantly aware of the educational problems, priorities, needs, and areas of concern.
5. Ted Rising Sun, a Northern Cheyenne, said, - Parental influence can make the school a true expression of the community's hopes and needs. Culture conflict can be minimized and more importantly local control of schools will add immeasurable to Indian self-respect.

We are capable of making decisions and controlling our own schools. This has been demonstrated at the Rocky Boy's School in Montana, Ramah Navajo School in New Mexico, and Rough Rock demonstration school in Arizona.

Indian parents, as screening committees, must look critically at the textbooks used in the school. The material and textbook used in the schools must reflect cultural diversity, and they must emphasize the positiveness of the great contributions the American Indian has made to this great country. As educators we can encourage the development of more positive self-concepts of the Indian child. We must eliminate the stereotypes and correct the image that the "Indian is only good with his hands." The concept of intellectual inferiority of the American Indian must end for it has resulted in a warped understanding of the Indian student's cultural heritage. It has resulted in feelings of alienation, hopelessness, rejection, depression, anxiety, and frustration. Feeling such as these must be substituted with pride in Indian self-worth. The Indian cultural integrity must be preserved. The tragedy the American Indian Student has experienced educationally must be discontinued. Innovative and effective educational programs must be implemented.

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